Rothbury

URBAN * DISTRICT * COUNCIL.

REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

FOR THE YEAR ENDING

DECEMBER 31st, 1900.

ROTHBURY:
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ROTHBURY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Report of Medical Officer

For the Year ending December 31st, 1900.

ROTHBURY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 1901.

TO THE ROTHBURY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,

Allow me to present you with this, my Fifth Annual Report, which is that for the year 1900.

There were 37 births registered during the year, of which 20 were males, and 17 females. Estimating the population at 1,200, this is at a rate of 30·8, being a great increase upon last year's—of only 17·5 per 1,000 per annum, and even above the 30·0 for England and Wales. They were registered as follows : During the first quarter, 9 ; the second, 13 ; the third, 6 ; and the last, 9.

The number of deaths was 29, but 2 were strangers, thus giving a rate of 22·5 belonging to the district. This is heavy, and a good deal above our average for the last 11 years of 18·2. Of those belonging to the district, 17 were males, and 10 females. They occurred each month as follows : January, 6 ; February, 3 ; March, 3 ; May, 1 ; June, 1 ; July, 3 ; August, 3 ; September, 1 ; November, 5 ; December, 1.

As there were 37 births during the year and 27 deaths, it follows that the difference, 10, was naturally added to the population. This gives a rate of 8·33 only, as against that for England and Wales of about 12·0. It is low, but much better than that for last year of only 3·3.

Of the 37 births, 4 died before attaining one year of age. This gives an infantile death-rate of 103·1 per 1,000 born, as against that for England and Wales of 120, and is satisfactory.

The deaths occurred at the following ages :—Under one year, 4 ; one and under five, 3 ; five and under fifteen, 1 ; twenty-five and under sixty-five, 10 ; while 9, or nearly one third, were over sixty-five years of age. One was 88, another 85, and 5 others were over 70 years of age. It seems to me, therefore, that a large amount of the heavy death-rate is due to there being such an aged population living amongst us ; and the trying wet seasons, with attacks of influenza, were largely due to the decease of many of these.

The zymotic (or epidemic) class of disease, caused 7 of the deaths as follows:—Scarlet fever, 3; whooping cough, 3; and gastritis, 1. This is at a rate of 5·8, and is quite excessive. They were answerable for all the 4 infantile deaths, and will be referred to again.

Phthisis (consumption) caused 3 deaths; cancer, 2; bronchitis, 2; pleurisy, 1; heart diseases, 6 (many of which I have no doubt followed in the train of influenza); apoplexy, 1; senile decay, 2; other diseases, 3.

Concerning the strangers, one was a male aged 58 years, who died of apoplexy, and the other a male aged 34, who came into the district with tubercular disease of the bowels upon him.

There were no inquests held, and no proceedings before the magistrates. One family just removed in time into a larger house.

Measles were imported from the Crook Crossings in May, and it spread throughout June and July. A few cases continued to occur till it ended in December. The families were advised to keep from school, isolate, and disinfect. There were 41 cases, but no deaths.

The Scarlet Fever outbreak that occurred towards the end of the previous year, it is much to be regretted, dragged its course most disappointingly along throughout the year in spite of all that was tried to check it. There were 19 cases notified in all, 10 being under, and 9 over, 5 years of age, and it occurred in 15 different houses. Of these cases 8 were notified in January, 3 in February, 2 in March, 2 in May, and 1 in July (a young man who had it severely 6 months previously). There came a lull until October 2nd; both lads in the upper school, and it is probable that the school books may have retained this, and caused it. On December 1st another occurred in the High School. This was well washed and disinfected, as well as closed during the same. Every house was visited and inspected by me. Full directions to isolate and disinfect were given, both by word of mouth and also printed directions. Disinfectants were supplied by your Board. I cannot help thinking that some cases were never reported, and thus kept the epidemic from being stamped out. The winter clothes put away in spring, and brought out in autumn and winter, also help. Doubtless visiting is also a frequent help. Unsanitary conditions were attended to and removed, except those at the South Terrace Cottages. When it is considered that the 19 cases occurred in 15 different houses, it must be admitted that a good deal of care was taken in most of the individual houses. 3 of the cases at once went to the Isolation Hospital, and this at once arrested the outbreak in their homes. These were disinfected forthwith. There were 3 deaths associated with this outbreak. One, a child aged 3 years, was the only one really due solely to it. A woman just confined took it and died; and a child, who had recovered, took merringitis and died of that.

Whooping Cough was imported to the Railway Station Hotel in June, and spread from July to October. The deaths of three infants were due to this disease, such being very fatal to them while so young. Most of the children ran about with it upon them. Some took influenza with it, and were very ill. The schools' holidays were taken early in order to try and check it, with but poor success.

Influenza, especially among children, was prevalent at times, and then for a time quietened. In July and August it was often associated with whooping cough and also measles, producing a good deal of chest complaints. Again in October. Early closing of the schools doubtless helped to stop it spreading in the country, but there was too much playing together in the village to check it and these other illnesses.

Diarrhœa was but little in evidence, and there were no deaths due to it.

Erysipelas.—Four cases were notified, one spontaneous, the others in connection with wounds and abscess. They were told to use care, and use disinfectants.

The Board's attention has been drawn to the Main North Sewer, also to the need of ventilation in the Malting Yard to the south side one. This is in course of improvement I am told. Enquiries have been made as to Whitton Crescent drain, and found it faulty. Further steps are to be taken. A large extension has been made to the South Terrace sewer; here four new houses with all sanitary arrangements have been built. New houses, after the plans had passed the Board, have been built at the head of the town on the south side, and the wretched old railway station replaced by a neat and commodious wood and brick structure with sanitary conveniences.

During a heavy rainfall Cobletch overflowed its course. The wood grating would be better replaced by an iron one, as it would offer less obstruction. The unsanitary conditions at the rear of the Sun Inn have been rectified. Foggin's open manure midden, previously causing so much nuisance, has been covered in, being a great improvement. At the South Terrace cottages very unsanitary conditions still exist.

The slaughter-houses were often inspected by me. Henderson's was removed, at last, by his landlord's orders. A most foul midden was kept by him. Nichol had also in September to be cautioned by me for putting the offall, the same as Henderson, into the manure midden. Foggin's was kept better. No complaint of Bergin's. Your Board has discussed the question of providing public slaughter-houses, but could not see their way to any definite conclusion.

Nuisances were also rectified at Drysdale's cow shed and the County Hotel manure midden.

The usual ash-middens had to be reported for being overflowing, viz. : Head of town, Malting Yard, river side, lodging house, South Terrace cottages. The Board do not yet see their way to undertake the emptying of these, but I hope that they may do so. It would be a public boon if they did all the privies and ash-middens themselves. They will never be tidy until.

The lodging house was inspected periodically and found clean, except the midden too full.

The water supply, taken from a spring on the side of the Simonside Hill, off the freestone, is a soft water, and perfectly pure. It is brought for a distance of about 3 miles, nearly all the way, in 5 inch iron pipes. There is no possible contamination by human being. It is abundant, constant service. Houses are being built upon the north side of the valley, and these its pressure from the storage at Whitton is unable to reach.

I am indebted to Mr. Bertram, of Cragside, for the following table of rainfall during the year 1900 :—

MONTHS.	INCHES.
January	5·15
February	7·37
March	3·06
April	1·62
May	1·53
June	4·03
July	1·64
August	4·79
September	1·01
October	6·05
November	5·07
December	2·66
Total ...	43·98

This is about 10 inches above our average. It was a wet year, and there were 199 wet days. The hours of sunshine were only 1338.

Your obedient servant,

F. BARROW,

Medical Officer of Health.